



Halt Station India: The Dramatic Tale of the Nation's First Rail Lines

By Rajendra B. Aklekar

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Halt Station India chronicles the dramatic rise of India's original rail network, the arrival of the first train, and the subsequent emergence of a pioneering electric line—all in the port city of Bombay. Trains that once provoked awe and fear—they were viewed as fire chariots, smoke-spewing demons—have today become a nation's lifeblood. Taking a walk along India's first rail lines, the author stumbles upon fragments of the past—a clock at Victoria Terminus that offers a rare view of a city; a cannon near Masjid Bunder Station that is worshipped as a god; a watchtower overlooking Sion Station, believed to have housed a witch. Each pit-stop comes with stories of desire and war, ambition and death—by Dockyard Road Station, for instance, author Laurence Sterne's beloved, Eliza Draper, followed a sailor into the sea; or close to Parel Station, the wife of India's governor general, Lord Canning found a garden rich in tropical vegetation; this, she replicated at Barrackpore. Drawing from journals, biographies, newspapers and railway archives—and with nostalgic, first-time accounts of those who travelled by India's earliest trains—the book captures the economic and social revolutions spurred by the country's first train line. In this, Halt Station India is not just about the railways—it is the story of the growth of India's business capital and a rare study of a nation.

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- Sales Rank: #2951617 in Books
- Published on: 2014-12-01
- Released on: 2015-01-07
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .58" w x 5.50" l, .57 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 227 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Rajendra B. Aklekar's research and his scholarship which enables him to interpret his findings throws new light on the way railways were built. --Sir Mark Tully, author of Non-Stop India

Fascinating stuff. An enormous amount of really rigorous work. --Naresh Fernandes, author of City Adrift: A Short Biography of Bombay

About the Author

A journalist for the past twenty years, Rajendra B. Aklekar has two things on his mind the railways and Bombay. He started his career with Rusi Karanjia's firebrand The Daily, where he used to run a weekly column on the history of Bombay's railway stations. Presently, Aklekar is associated with The Times Group's Mumbai Mirror. He has trained himself in museology to document Bombay's vanishing relics, helped the railways set up heritage galleries, and worked on several prestigious projects to conserve the city's ancient structures.

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